

The Honorable Paul A. Engelmayer
United States District Judge
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
Thurgood Marshall Courthouse
40 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

June 6, 2020

Your Honor,

My name is Oliver Josephs and I've known Ari Teman for over a decade from running JCorps Washington, DC, and before that as a volunteer in JCorps NYC. I want to stress how much of rare and valuable gift Ari is to the Jewish community, to cities around the world, and the many thousands people of all backgrounds we have helped with JCorps over the years. I want to show you how he is always careful with his word, how honesty and trust are important to him, and how generous and kind he is to so many. I hope you will show mercy to him and allow him the freedom to continue to do good for so many.

Ari built and ran JCorps unpaid, purely, as a mission-driven project to help others. He inspired thousands of young adults of all backgrounds to give their limited free time to serve others. Ari may have done it for free, but he did it with the full professionalism and effort you'd expect from a major organization. He worked tirelessly, day, night, weekends. He traveled to cities to help chapter directors launch, as he did with me when I moved from NYC to Washington DC and was inspired to open JCorps.

Ari was and remains always available to help and encourage and cheer on his volunteers. He still to this day helps volunteers with jobs, with connections, he roots them on and coaches them in their relationships and marriages. The couples who met because of him and their kids know he's an easy sale for girl scout cookies, which he proudly helps them advertise online. There are countless families and friendships that exist because of Ari's relentless kindness in building JCorps.

JCorps fed thousands of meals to the homeless, visited hundreds of seniors, did crafts with children in hospitals, children with special needs, and inner city youth. JCorps helped build homes, took shelter animals for walks, and helped clean and build parks and playgrounds around the world.

When Hurricane Sandy struck NYC, Ari – who was literally in the hospital that weekend incredibly ill – pulled himself together enough to ensure that 150 JCorps volunteers were the first team to arrive downtown to bring water and food to the elderly in buildings that had lost power for their elevators and water pumps. Ari, shaking and in pain, stood out in the cold with a paper pad and a mobile phone, ensuring building after building, floor after floor was checked and that every senior and disabled person had what they needed and knew what was happening.

After that weekend, Ari climbed back into bed, where he fought illness, a horrible sleep disorder, for months more until surgery repaired his breathing. He then, without hesitation set back on building his life. While he was severely ill, he never stopped being there for JCorps volunteers – even bedridden, he was often our most-vocal cheerleader and friend.

In Your Honor's New York City, and around the world in the USA, Israel, and Canada, thousands of young professionals and students got their first experience volunteering because of Ari. Ari was the ultimate recruiter for good deeds, he made it cool, and he ran things professionally.

Ari put in every email a paragraph to us who'd applied to volunteer and been accepted titled "Your Word". He explained that "JCorps existed as a conversation". We gave our word to soup kitchens and children's hospitals that we'd show up, and to do that volunteers needed to keep their word. JCorps was perhaps the most reliable volunteer network for this reason. If JCorps said 20 volunteers were coming, they came. Ari built systems to text and email reminders so that even hungover millennials would wake up and show up on time. He built a database to track reliability, and he constantly improved the system.

Ari didn't just build JCorps, but seeing that other nonprofits were not running efficiently, he created "12gurus:Charity" a TED-style conference to share best practices for nonprofits. He had leaders from some of the best charities in the world getting together and sharing ideas. When a doctor friend said they needed it for healthcare, he created 12gurus:Health. Ari gave the videos away free to the world on the websites, and also let JCorps volunteers, students, and local leaders attend free if they couldn't afford a ticket.

Ari kept his word. He taught thousands of our young adults the value and power of keeping theirs. We helped countless people because of it, and became better people by giving. Many volunteers dedicated their lives to a career in helping or their weekends to volunteering because of Ari.

Over the years, I watched Ari work tirelessly to rebuild his life. He was always working, online, at conferences, at trade shows. You could see photos and videos of him and his team at all hours of the day and even weekends working to install their systems. Ari never took a shortcut. He built a business with hard work, and then he built another.

Your Honor has found that Ari did something wrong. I hope Your Honor will look at this as an exceptionally kind, honest, and well-intentioned person who made a mistake but that at his core Ari cares about the truth, and about giving his life to helping others.

I ask that you have mercy on the thousands of people whom Ari helped & inspired by having mercy on Ari. Please let Ari, who has no prior offenses and is a uniquely good person, serve his sentence through service and volunteering by running JCorps or other volunteering. Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Oliver Josephs", with a stylized, looping design.

Oliver Josephs